



Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

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Testimony of Naomi Elliott Gallagher
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Before the Select Committee on Children
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Senator Musto, Representative Urban and the members of the committee.
My name is Naomi Elliott-Gallagher and I work for the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. I have been fortunate to also be a member of the CT Team on Runaway and Homeless Youth.

I am here to testify regarding Bill No. 292 "An Act Concerning Homeless Youth"

Our work at CCEH has primarily focused on family homelessness and the children in those families, but we are also very concerned about what appears to be a growing number of homeless youth nationally and here in CT. Our data shows thousands of homeless children in CT each year, but those numbers do not include hundreds of unaccompanied youth, a hidden homeless population. It is complicated to find these young people under the rubble of homelessness, as "couchsurfing", methods of recluse and lack of resources has created this "invisible" population. Youth are often pushed off to receive services that are meant for adults, but youth need services that address the needs of their unique population. Many may be able to avoid burdening the system if they received targeted resources now. Addressing this critical problem now will prevent long-term homelessness and its high cost to our state later. Homeless children become homeless youth who become homeless adults.

Respite from Street

Drop in centers and safe havens give youth a reprieve from an unsafe environment, as well as provide access to various resources and services. Early connection to resources is a critical intervention in preventing homelessness among at-risk youth and providing alternative housing opportunities to those currently experiencing homelessness. The proposed drop in centers would provide low demand settings where youth can engage in these critical services.

Rental assistance, Supportive housing and Services

CCEH supports housing based solutions to ending homelessness among all populations. While emergency respite may be necessary in a crisis situation, affordable and supportive housing is the key to long term stability for homeless youth. In some instances, youth can benefit from short or medium term rental assistance to maintain housing while receiving support services that offer employment and educational opportunities as well as other resources that may prevent future homelessness and encourage long term stability.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to end homelessness for all children.

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